DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 443 262 EC 307 958

TITLE	Building IEPs with Maryland Families: What a Great IDEA! A Guide for Developing, Implementing and Reviewing Individualized Education Programs for Students with Disabilities.
INSTITUTION	Maryland State Dept. of Education, Baltimore. Office of Special Education.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	21p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Dept. of Education, 200 West Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD 21201; Tel: 410-767-0242; Fax: 410-333-8165.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Check Lists; *Disabilities; Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Family Involvement; Federal Legislation; *Individualized Education Programs; *Parent Participation; *Parent Teacher Conferences; *Program Development; *Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS	*Maryland

ABSTRACT

This guide suggests a fresh perspective for families and professionals working together to develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities living in Maryland. It begins by explaining the purpose of IEPs and by providing the principles for IEP development in Maryland. Information is then provided on how the IEP is developed, IEP team members, the IEP timeline, and IEP components, including performance levels, measurable goals, statement of special education and related services, determination of services, supplementary aids and services, program modifications and supports, statement of participation in statewide and local assessments, method of informing parents of student progress, special considerations, transition services, and least restrictive environment student placement. Tools that IEP team members must have to hammer home ideas and nail down plans for helping the student reach individualized education goals are described, and tips are provided for parents for successful IEP team meetings. Questions are also provided that should be answered as part of the IEP development process. The booklet closes with IEP development checklists for parents, teachers, and students. (CR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

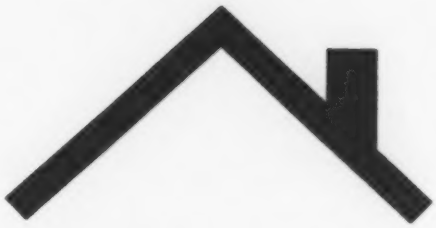
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED 443 262



Building IEPs with Maryland *Families:* What A Great **IDEA**!

A Guide for Developing, Implementing and Reviewing **Individualized Education Programs** for Students with Disabilities

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

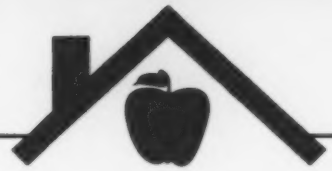
Crenson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



A Foundation for **Learning**

Maryland's education system is guided by the fundamental belief that **all children can learn!** If educational opportunities are provided in appropriate settings, children can grow to their fullest potential.

Providing educational opportunities for children requires an action plan—a **foundation for learning.** For students with disabilities, that plan is called the *Individualized Education Program,* or IEP.

The **IEP** is a written document outlining the *who, what, when, why, where* and *how* of instruction and related services that are to be provided to a student with disabilities. IEPs are built upon the strengths of individual students and are designed to help each student achieve success in school, at home, at work, and in the community.

This guide. **Building IEPs With Maryland Families,** suggests a fresh perspective for families and professionals working together to develop IEPs for students with disabilities living in Maryland. **Welcome!**

What's Inside This Guide

The Contents

Getting to Know the Floor Plan:
Understanding the IEP

page 2

Gathering the Tools:
Preparing to Develop the IEP

page 9

Assembling the Builders and Getting to Work: **Having the IEP Team Meeting**

page 11

Adding the Finishing Touches and Moving In: **Implementing the IEP**

page 15

Keeping An Eye on the Investment:
Reviewing the IEP

page 16

Why Is Building IEPs with Maryland Families Such A Great IDEA?

IDEA—or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—requires that IEPs be developed for students with disabilities. IDEA establishes that a written plan must specify how education, related services, and support will be delivered to a student with disabilities. The written plan is called the **IEP.**

Think of developing the IEP as if you were building a family's home. First, you talk with the family to obtain input. Then you need to consider how the family lives and what they want in a home. This allows you to identify the family's wants and needs and gain an understanding of what is important to everyone in the family.

The same holds true for building IEPs! Schools and related service and support providers must work with families to gain insight into each student's personality, history, educational experiences and learning styles. Active family involvement is essential to student success. That's why building IEPs with Maryland families is such a great IDEA!

Let's Get Started.

Before laying out plans, gathering information, or assembling IEP team members, it is important that everyone understands the purpose of an IEP, how it should be developed, and how it is to be used.

The IEP is a written document identifying the special education and related service supports needed for a student with a disability. The IEP allows everyone with a role in teaching, nurturing, and supporting the student to help determine where the student is going, how the student will get there, how long it may take, and what the student may need along the way.

Understanding the IEP

Principles Guiding IEP Development in Maryland

Several principles guide the development of IEPs for Maryland students.

1. All children can learn!
2. All students have a right to attend schools in which they can progress and learn.
3. Successful learning involves successful home and school partnerships.
4. All students should have an opportunity to learn equally rigorous content.
5. Schools should help prepare students for productive adult lives.
6. Special education is specifically-designed instruction and related services to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.
7. Planning for students with disabilities takes flexibility and an open mind.
8. To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with students who are non-disabled.
9. The IEP is based upon a student's ability to participate and progress in the general education curriculum, with appropriate adaptations to meet the unique needs of that student.

Additionally, the student with a disability must be educated in the **least restrictive environment (LRE).** This means that to the maximum extent appropriate, the student is educated with students who are non-disabled. Separate schooling or other removal of the student from the general education environment occurs only if the nature or severity of his/her disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Getting to Know the Floor Plan

Understanding the IEP

How Is the IEP Developed?

The IEP is written at a meeting where observations, assessment results, classroom data, and progress notes are presented and discussed by the IEP team. During the meeting, the opinions of all **IEP team members** are heard in a respectful, open environment.

The IEP team includes the student's parents, a general education teacher, a special educator, a public agency representative, an individual who can interpret instructional implications, and as appropriate, the student for whom the IEP is being developed. The IEP team may also include others who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student.

IEP Team Members

Parents know their child best and can discuss their child's personality and history. Parents offer insight into past educational experiences and can help IEP team members understand the student's strengths, needs, frustrations and interests. Parents and students may invite anyone they choose to attend the IEP meeting.

The **general education teacher** has knowledge of the school's general education curriculum requirements.

The **special educator** or **special education provider** knows specialized techniques and strategies for instruction, and will likely provide services to the student.

continued...

Understanding the IEP

IEP Team Members...*continued*

A **public agency representative** is an individual qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially-designed instruction to meet the student's unique needs. This person should know about the public agency's resources and be able to commit these resources to implement the student's IEP.

An **individual who can interpret instructional implications of the evaluation results** may be one of the teachers, the public agency representative, or appropriate related service personnel.

Other **individuals who have knowledge or special expertise** regarding the student may include related service personnel such as occupational or physical therapists.

Since the **student** is the focal point of IEP development, whenever possible (and if determined appropriate), the student should attend the IEP team meeting. If unable to attend, consideration for the student's preferences and interests are to be insured by the public agency representative along with the parents.

At least 10 days before the IEP team meeting, the public agency shall take steps to ensure that the parents are provided proper written notice of the meeting, including date, time, location, purpose, and a list of all persons who will attend.

Getting to Know the Floor Plan

Understanding the IEP

What Is In The IEP?

In addition to personal information such as the student's name and address, the IEP contains the following components.

IEP Components

1. **Performance Levels:** Includes a statement of present levels of educational performance and how the student's disability impacts involvement and progression in the general curriculum. For preschool-aged students, this section should describe how the disability affects the student's participation in appropriate activities.

2. **Measurable Goals:** Indicates *annual goals* for the student and includes short-term instructional objectives related to meeting the student's needs and enabling the student to participate in the general curriculum, whenever possible. Criteria and procedures for evaluating progress are also included as a way for the IEP team members to track the student's progress toward achieving goals.

3. **Statement of Special Education and Related Services:** Describes the delivery of specially-designed instruction, related services, and supplementary aids and services, as well as a statement of program modifications or supports for school personnel.

4. **Determination of Services:** Specifies dates for the initiation, frequency and duration of services, and a projected date for review of the student's progress toward annual goals.

continued...

Understanding the IEP

IEP Components...*continued*

5. **Supplementary Aids and Services:** Outlines the exact nature of specialized services or devices required to enable the student to progress toward annual goals while participating in the general curriculum. Examples include, but are not limited to, electronic communication devices, low-tech devices and aides, preferential seating, use of a calculator, peer tutoring, and computer programs to assist with specific skills.

6. **Program Modifications and Supports:** Describes modifications and supports needed to help the student advance toward annual goals, be involved in the general curriculum, participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities, and be instructed with other students—with and without disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, adapted assignments, specialized classroom seating, testing modifications, staff training, physical modifications of the classroom, and individual assistance as determined by the IEP team.

7. **Statement of Participation in Statewide and Local Assessments:** Describes accommodations needed by the student to take tests given as part of the State's or jurisdiction's ongoing assessment program. If the IEP team determines that the student will not participate in general curriculum tests and assessments, alternative assessments are identified.

continued...

Understanding the IEP

IEP Components...*continued*

8. **Method for Informing Parents of Student Progress:** States how parents will be informed of their child's progress, and the extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the student to meet annual goals.

9. **Special Considerations:** As appropriate, the IEP team may include a behavioral intervention plan; positive behavioral supports; the needs of a student with limited English proficiency; and the provision of Braille for a student who is blind or has vision impairments. For the student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing, language and communication needs *must* be discussed. Assistive technology must be considered for all students.

10. **Transition Services:** If the student is age 14 (or younger if appropriate), the IEP must include a statement of transition service needs. Beginning at age 16, the IEP must include a statement of needed transition services, including if appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities and needed linkages that will be necessary for the student to successfully exit into the world of work and the community.

11. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** If services are to be delivered anywhere other than the regular classroom, the following question must be answered. *"How much of the school day will the student be educated separately from his/her non-disabled peers or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities such as clubs and lunch?"*

Gathering the Tools

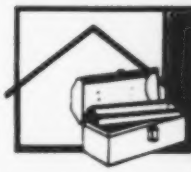
Preparing to Develop the IEP

Each IEP Team Member Must Come Prepared.

Preparing for an IEP team meeting requires more tools than notes and progress reports. Each IEP team member must come prepared to hammer home ideas and nail down plans for helping the student reach individualized education goals. Make sure your *tool box* is stocked with the following.

- **Respect for Others, Creativity and Flexibility:** The IEP team may not agree on every issue. Come prepared to listen. Remember that collaboration is the essence of the IEP process. Be prepared to look at all programming aspects and understand there may be more than one way to reach a goal.
- **Reasonable Expectations:** Federal regulations call for providing every student with a free appropriate public education (FAPE), and not necessarily "maximum" benefit. Consider what the student needs to reasonably achieve recommended goals and objectives and make meaningful educational progress.
- **Patience and Tolerance:** Some IEP issues may be difficult. As IEP team members express their thoughts and recommendations, remember that *the message* is as important as the way it is delivered. Be honest, patient and thoughtful. Encourage open communication.
- **Commitment to Working Together:** The IEP should represent the contributions of all team members. Listen to each member so that the written document clearly expresses what services the student will receive.
- **Ability to Focus on the Student's Needs:** Remember that an *individualized* education program is being developed. Design a program that fits the student instead of fitting the student to an existing program.

continued...



Gathering the Tools

Preparing to Develop the IEP

- **Clear Communication:** Limit the use of educational jargon or terms that may not be understood by the entire IEP team. Explain terms or acronyms that may be unfamiliar.
- **Knowledge of Your Role as an IEP Team Member:** Understand your importance to the IEP team and be prepared to answer questions about how your contributions may impact the team's decisions.

Tips for Parents

1. **Be prepared to describe your child.** You know your child best. Share your insight with the IEP team. Describe dreams and expectations you have for your child. Let the team know what you think your child is capable of doing, and what you see your child doing in the future.
2. **Bring someone who knows your child.** If you wish to request the presence of someone who tested your child or whose input you feel may be helpful, let the team leader know before the meeting. If the person is available, they may attend. You may also bring a friend or an advocate who knows your child.
3. **Stay focused on your child's needs.** Stick to matters that directly relate to your child's educational needs and development of the IEP.
4. **Write down your questions and comments.** It may be hard to remember everything you want to talk about. List your questions and concerns on a sheet of paper and bring them with you.
5. **Use other IEP team members as resources** for you and your child.

Assembling the Builders and Getting to Work

Having the IEP Team Meeting

Let's Get To Work.

Everyone understands the IEP and has prepared for the IEP team meeting. It's now time to gather members together and get to work building the IEP. The following questions should be answered as part of the IEP development process.

1. **Where is the student headed?** The IEP team chairperson may refer to this as "setting the purpose." The student is introduced to the team by descriptions provided by parents, teachers, and others who can describe the student and the student's needs. Understanding the student's experiences and skill levels allows for realistic long-term goal setting later in the process.

2. **Where is the student now?** Discussion of the student continues and should focus on the student's strengths. Additionally, data is introduced to identify specific areas in which the student is not progressing in the same manner as peers without disabilities. This data comes from assessments, observations by school staff, and parents. Knowing the student's strengths allows the IEP team to determine how the student can participate in the general curriculum and related activities.

3. **How is the student progressing?** The goals and benchmarks for progress are determined by examining how the student learns, what he needs to learn, and what special accommodations are needed for the student to progress toward education goals. Observations and data provided by those who have instructed the student in the past, as well as assessment information, assist the IEP team in setting reasonable goals to be accomplished sometime within 12 months.

continued...

Having the IEP Team Meeting

5. **What does the student need?** Specially-designed instruction for participation in general curriculum activities are discussed as the team develops the IEP. The IEP should describe any additional needs and services to be addressed through special education and related services. These special considerations are intended to ensure the student's access to the general education curriculum.

6. **What are the parents' concerns?** Parents can provide important information to help the team better understand the student. The IEP team chairperson will ask parents about their concerns and observations regarding their child's behaviors at home, attention to tasks, and ability to relate to others.

7. **How will the student reach education goals?** The IEP team considers data, annual goals, and descriptions of the student's strengths and needs, then carefully crafts a description of the Individualized Education Program. Whenever possible, the IEP should call for the student to be instructed in a way that allows for participation in the general curriculum and in settings with students without disabilities.

8. **How will the team know the student has met education goals outlined in the IEP?** The IEP must be written in a format that allows the team to recognize when outcomes have, or have not, been achieved.

9. **If the student is turning 14, what is the plan for transition?** Federal and State regulations require additional planning as students reach age 14. Whether the student will receive a Maryland High School Diploma or Certificate, consideration must be given to preparing the student for life beyond the secondary school level. Transition specialists, counselors, employers, and adult service providers may assist the team in making decisions.

Assembling the Builders and Getting to Work

Having the IEP Team Meeting

Parent Checklist

- ❒ Did I receive written notice of the scheduled IEP meeting at least 10 days in advance?
- ❒ Were procedural safeguards explained to me?
- ❒ Did I give written permission for the initial assessments?
- ❒ Were assessment reports reviewed with me?
- ❒ Did I describe my child and state my expectations?
- ❒ Did the IEP team consider my recommendations?
- ❒ Did the IEP team discuss my child's participation in statewide assessments?
- ❒ Did the IEP team include needed accommodations and/or modifications?
- ❒ Is transition from early childhood to school-age special education in place?
- ❒ Was the need for extended school-year services (ESY) considered?
- ❒ Were transition services *(starting at age 14)* discussed?
- ❒ Were my child's physical education needs considered?
- ❒ Were my child's transportation needs considered?
- ❒ Did I ask the IEP team to consider my Independent Evaluations, if I had them done?
- ❒ Did the IEP team consider my need for training?
- ❒ Did I receive a copy of my child's IEP, and have I had an opportunity to review it?

Student Checklist

- ❒ Do I understand the IEP and the purpose of the IEP team and meeting?
- ❒ Was I invited to attend the meeting (if appropriate)?
- ❒ Were all team members introduced to me?
- ❒ Were my assessment results explained to me?
- ❒ Were all of my questions heard and answered?
- ❒ Do I know what comes next?

Assembling the Builders and Getting to Work

Having the IEP Team Meeting

Team Member Checklist

- ❒ Was the purpose of the meeting clearly stated?
- ❒ Were all necessary reports submitted?
- ❒ Were assessment reports discussed?
- ❒ Were recommendations based on evaluations and observations of the student?
- ❒ What follow-up activities are needed?

Team Chairperson Checklist

- ❒ Were all IEP team members, including the parents, given written notification of the meeting date, time, and purpose at least 10 days in advance?
- ❒ Were all members provided appropriate reports and data?
- ❒ Were procedural safeguards provided to the parents?
- ❒ Were all members introduced at the meeting?
- ❒ Were assessments presented and reviewed?
- ❒ Are any further assessments needed?
- ❒ Were communication needs and behavioral interventions considered?
- ❒ Were assistive technology devices and services considered?
- ❒ Were IEP team members designated for follow-up activities?

Adding the Finishing Touches and Moving In

Implementing the IEP

The IEP In Action

Good work team! The IEP has been developed. Responsibilities have been determined. Communication with teachers has been arranged and working relationships are being forged. The checklist below will help ensure the IEP has a solid foundation as everyone begins working toward stated goals and objectives.

IEP Implementation Checklist

- ❑ The IEP has been shared and discussed with appropriate staff members and service providers.
- ❑ Instruction focuses on the student's strengths and needs.
- ❑ Instruction reflects stated IEP goals and objectives.
- ❑ Identified modifications and accommodations are being provided.
- ❑ A designated IEP team member is monitoring the student's progress.

Keeping an Eye on the Investment

Reviewing the IEP

Don't Let Things Fall Apart.

Maintenance is a very important part of the IEP process. The IEP *must* be reviewed at least once a year to make sure the student is progressing toward stated goals. However, IEP team members may request a meeting to review the IEP at anytime. Based on the student's progress, some changes may be needed. These changes may be structural, but continued monitoring by designated team members will ensure the IEP continues to be appropriate. The IEP team members should go over the checklist below to make sure the foundation stays solid.

The IEP Review Checklist

- ❑ Have the goals of the student remained the focal point in developing, implementing, and reviewing the IEP?
- ❑ Has new information about the student's performance in school, at home, or in the community been considered?
- ❑ Has progress been made toward each IEP goal and objective?
- ❑ Have modifications and adaptations been reviewed and discussed?
- ❑ Has the need for extended school year services been discussed?
- ❑ Have transition goals and needs been discussed?
- ❑ Have all IEP team members, *including the student,* received written notification of the scheduled IEP review meeting?

Continuous collaboration among parents, administrators, teachers and related service providers can help guarantee student success!

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

State of Maryland

A publication of the Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Carol Ann Baglin
Assistant State Superintendent

Jerry F. White
Program Manager
Program Administration and Support Branch

Parris N. Glendening
Governor, State of Maryland

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs.

Building IEPs with Maryland *Families*: What A Great **IDEA**!

The **Arc of Maryland**

MANSEF
Maryland Association of Non-Public Special Education Facilities

Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Maryland Disability Law Center

Maryland State Teachers Association

Parents Place of Maryland

Partners for Success: *Resource Centers for Families and Schools*

The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH)

University of Maryland Clinical Law Program

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/
Early Intervention Services
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595

© 2000 by the Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services